AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ΦBK

SOCIETY,

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING,

IN

NEW-HAVEN,

ON THE FIFTH OF DECEMBER,

A. D. 1797.

BY EBENEZER GRANT MARSH.

HARTFORD:
PRINTED BY
HUDSON & GOODWIN.

1798.

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN ORATION.

THE ſtudy of language has ever been conſidered in poliſhed countries, as a very important part of a liberal education. No art has been cultivated with a greater degree of care, or, perhaps, with an equal ſhare of aſſiduity and perſeverance. It, however, unfortunately happens, that, at the preſent day, particularly in our own country, the ſtudent is ſo much under the control of a corrupt taſte, as to neglect that ſpecies of learning, without which, a complete knowledge of this moſt uſeful and noble branch of education cannot be obtained. An opinion appears to be current among our ſtudents, that a knowledge of the learned, or, as they are otherwiſe denominated, the dead languages, is in no way eſſential to the ſtudy of our own language, and, indeed, that it is productive of no valuable purpoſe whatever. They do not conſider, that this knowledge is the *key* to a great proportion of the ſciences, and they reject the well founded opinion, that no other than a partial idea of any modern dialect, can be acquired, without recurring to its primitive ſour-

ſcended, but they generally reſided near the ſame ſpot. A ſmall proportion of them, only, were employed in building the *Tower of Babel*, the change, therefore, which the dialect of thoſe ſuffered, who were engaged in this impious work, did not probably affect their language.

Some authors of eminence appear to doubt, whether this language was the *Hebrew*. A great part of theſe incline to the opinion that it was the *Chaldaic*. Thoſe, who do not, ſuppoſe that it was either the *Syriac* or *Arabic*. Very few, however, embrace the laſt opinion, ſince the probability is ſo ſtrong, that theſe two were merely dialects of one or other of the former. The only genuine Chaldaic now extant, is ſaid by Walton, to be contained in nearly 300 verſes in the Hebrew ſcriptures.* By comparing theſe with the Hebrew, the reſemblance between the two languages, is as ſtriking as that between any two of the Grecian dialects. Notwithſtanding this, the latter is much more diſtinguiſhed for its ſimplicity than the former, which renders it probable that it had a priority of exiſtence. The Chaldeans early made conſiderable progreſs in refinement, their language, conſequently, became much more improved than the Hebrew, particularly in its *compounds* and *inflections*.

* 200 of theſe are in the book of *Daniel*, from the 2d verſe of the 3d chap. to the end of the 7th chap. incluſive—about 20 are in the 4th chap. of *Ezra*—17 in the 5th—16 in the 6th, and 15 in the 7th. There is, likewiſe, one verſe in the 10th chap. of *Jeremiah*.
Walt. proleg.

ANOTHER circumſtance, which corroborates the opinion, that the Hebrew was the moſt ancient, is, that all other dialects, at leaſt, as far as my information extends, appear to have been derived primarily from this. They generally contain many more words, which are evidently of Hebrew origin, than thoſe, which can be deduced from any other ſource. Indeed, we are acquainted with no language, if we except the *Chineſe*, which was in a great meaſure fabricated by their learned men, but what can be traced to this origin. The Arabic, particularly the Koreiſh, the Chaldaic, Ethiopian, Phenician, Egyptian, and Perſian, are ſaid, by philologiſts, to be only different dialects of one common parent. And, it is well known, that thoſe countries, in which each one of theſe dialects was ſpoken, were ſettled by the deſcendants of Noah, not long after the deluge.* The ancient names of towns, mountains, rivers and animals, in all theſe countries, were moſtly of Hebrew derivation.†—The nervous and copious Shanſcrite language, is ſaid to be ſtrongly impregnated with Hebrew idioms. "The "grand ſource of Indian literature," ſays Mr. Halhead, "the parent of almoſt every dialect from "the Perſian gulf to the Chineſe ſeas, is the *Shan-* "*ſcrite*—a language of the moſt venerable and

* The Arabians are ſuppoſed to be the deſcendants of Joktan the ſon of Eber—the Chaldeans, of Cheſed the ſon of Nahor—the Ethiopians, of Cuſh the ſon of Ham—the Egyptians, of Miſraim another of the ſons of Ham, and the Perſians, of Elam the ſon of Shem.

† Lowth.

" unfathomable antiquity. I have often been aſ-
" toniſhed," ſays he, " to find the ſimilitude of
" Shanſcrite words with thoſe of Hebrew, Per-
" ſian and Arabic, and even of Latin and Greek,
" and thoſe, not in the technical and metaphorical
" terms, which the mutuation of refined arts, and
" improved manners, might have originally intro-
" duced, but in the ground work of language, in
" monoſyllables, in names of numbers, and the
" appellation of ſuch things, as would be diſcrimi-
" nated, on the firſt dawn of civilization." India was probably ſettled by the poſterity of Shem, as it is well known that his deſcendants travelled that way. The Shanſcrite letters, when diveſted of their appendages, are ſaid by the author juſt quoted, to be the real Chaldaic characters, in which the Hebrew was early written.—The Grecian and Roman languages, which will ſoon be more particularly conſidered, the Celtic, the Gothic, and Sclavonic, are filled with words, which are indicative of the ſameneſs of their origin. " The Celtic," ſays " Whitaker, " was unqueſtionably one of the " dialects of the Hebrew, as it contains many " words which bear a ſtrong co-incidence with " words of that language; and the Gothic abounds " with idioms of the Perſian or Pahlavi language, " which was nearly related to the parent tongue." The Engliſh, which is partly a dialect of the Gothic or Saxon, bears a great affinity to the Hebrew; and the old Britiſh, which ſprang from the Celtic,

approached it much nearer. . This we can eaſily ſee, when we conſider, that it contained nearly 200 words, which were obviouſly the ſame as the Hebrew.§

FROM this ſummary view of the moſt reſpectable dialects, it is very evident that they all had one common parent, and we may rationally conclude, that this was the Hebrew.

THERE are few queſtions, which have given riſe to ſo much perplexity among the learned, as that with reſpect to the origin of letters. Thoſe authors, who have adopted the notion, that all arts and ſciences were derived from the Hebrews, are ſtrongly of the opinion, that they were invented anterior to the flood.* The traditions of the Jews, Aſſyrians, and Chaldeans, to this effect, have aided them, very much, in the formation of this opinion. Others,‡ whoſe reaſons appear more ſubſtantial, join with the generality of ancient hiſtorians, in aſcribing the invention of letters to the *ſecretary of an Egyptian king*.‖ It is generally acknowledged, that

§ Webſter's Diſſertations.

* See among other things, Connect. of Sacr. and Prof. Hiſt. vol. I. p. 236, 87.

‡ Warburton's legation of Moſes, vol. II. p. 136.

‖ Hermes, known likewiſe by the name of Mercury and Toth. The Egyptians imputed to him the invention of Muſic, and conſidered him as one of their greateſt philoſophers. It is uncertain when he flouriſhed, but it is ſuppoſed a long time before Moſes. That he was acquainted with alphabetical writing, is very evident from the writings of Sanchoniathon and Clement Alexan. The latter, ſpeaking of his 42 books, in which is contained all the civil and religious ſcience of the Egyptians, expreſsly ſays, that ten of them were written in a ſacred alphabetical character. Warb. leg. p. 140. Voltaire's Dia. de l'Abbe Baz.

the Egyptians were the firſt people after the flood, who made much progreſs in ſcience. They were, for ſome time, highly advanced in civilization and refinement, before a great part of the other nations of the world had emerged from ignorance and barbarity. In proportion as they progreſſed in philoſophical inveſtigations, and, therefore, had occaſion to write much, we can eaſily conceive, that they would ſee the inconvenience attending their hieroglyphical ſpecies of writing. This conſiſted either in a plain or enigmatical figure of the thing intended to be expreſſed. And, as the delineation of the figure was very exact, this mode of writing muſt have been too tedious and voluminous for uſe. They, therefore, by degrees, it is ſaid, adopted a character, which, being at firſt formed only by the outlines of each figure, finally became a kind of marks, perhaps not unlike the Chineſe writing. The ſtep, which eaſily ſucceeded this, was the invention of an *Alphabet*, by which they might expreſs words inſtead of things. This invention, is ſaid by Plato, in his account of Toth, to have been kept private, for ſome time, by the expreſs command of the king. And, until it was diſcovered, the alphabet was uſed in the ſecret buſineſs of the cabinet; for the letters would anſwer the ſame purpoſe with modern cyphers.

Some ſuppoſe, that letters were not invented till the decalogue was delivered to Moſes, at *Mount Sinai*, when, ſay they, their uſe was revealed to

him by God himself. But, if this was the case, it is entirely unaccountable that such an important fact was not recorded, or, at least, that no hint was given of it, in any part of the Pentateuch; "for," as the celebrated Warburton justly observes, "the "*memory* of it would have been one of the strong-"est barriers to idolatry."* Farther, the circumstance that God saw fit to deliver the commandments in alphabetical characters, very naturally leads us to infer, that that kind of writing was familiar to the Israelites.

On the whole, the most probable conclusion, with respect to the origin of letters, is, that they were invented in Egypt, and that Moses brought them with his other learning, from that country. In confirmation of this opinion it may here be observed, that the figure and nomenclature of the Hebrew alphabet, are very highly connected with hieroglyphical writing. Thus, to adduce a few instances, the *Beth* signifies an *house*, the *Daleth* a *door*, the *Vauv* a *pillar*, and the *Zain* a *cimeter*, of which things the letters bear considerable resemblance.‖ It is not improbable but that Moses might have enlarged the Egyptian alphabet, as that, with with which he wrote the *Pentateuch*, was more complete, than the one which Cadmus brought from Egypt into Greece.†

* Leg. vol. II. p. 146.
‖ Jews letters, p. 30.
† The alphabet of *Cadmus* consisted only of 16 letters, the *Hebrew*, 22.

IT is generally agreed, that the beautiful ſquare letters, in which the Hebrew ſcriptures are written, are the Chaldean§. Ezra, it is ſaid, after the return from the Babyloniſh captivity, ſubſtituted them for the old Hebrew. The Jews had reſided ſo long among the Chaldeans, that they had almoſt entirely forgotten their own letters, and thoſe of Chaldea had grown into uſe. It was, therefore, very neceſſary, that ſome perſon ſhould tranſcribe their ſacred writings into thoſe letters. Since that time, the old Hebrew character hath been retained only by the Samaritans, "among whom," ſays Dr. Prideax, "it is preſerved even to this day."

WRITERS have not been leſs divided with reſpect to the Hebrew *vowel-points*, than with reſpect to the origin of their letters. As theſe form ſo important a part of their language, it will not be expected that I ſhall paſs over them in ſilence. The two great queſtions with regard to the points, are, whether they were invented by EZRA, or by the doctors of the ſchool of Tiberias, commonly called MASORITES. The Jews, indeed, maintain, that they were delivered to Moſes, with the tables of ſtone, at Mount Sinai; but their arguments are futile, and not worthy of attention. It is, I believe, univerſally admitted among chriſtian writers, that, as long as the Jews continued to be a diſtinct nation, their language was written without

§ Hieron, in com. in Ez. Prid. connect. vol. II. p. 496. Gray's Key, p. 6.

them.* If it can be proved that they were uſed by *Ezra*, it will be admitted, without diſpute, that they are of the ſame authority with any part of his writings; but, if they were invented by the *Maſorites*, they can be changed, whenever it appears, that a better reading will be effected.

It was affirmed without oppoſition, that Ezra was the inventor of the points, until Elias Levita, a German Jew of the ſixteenth century, embraced the opinion, that they originated from the *Maſorites*, about 500 years after the chriſtian era. His opinion was afterwards ſtrongly advocated by Capellus, Morinus and others, but warmly oppoſed by the two Buxtorfs, though not to the ſatisfaction of the learned world.‖ The former contended, that the ſacred books uſed in the Jewiſh ſynagogues, have ever been entirely deſtitute of the points, which would not be the caſe if they were affixed by Ezra. They further maintained, that they were not uſed, and that there was not the leaſt hint given of them, by any of the writers, in the five or ſix firſt centuries. The latter aſſerted, that the ancient books of *Bahir* and *Zohar*, which are ſaid to have been written about the time of Chriſt, ſpeak frequently of them; and, aſide from this conſideration, that they

* If Moſes was taught the alphabet by God, it is very difficult to conceive how it ſhould be ſo *incomplete*, as, to be deſtitute of vowels As the Egyptian alphabet, however, was "invented for preciſion, and uſed for ſecrecy," it is very eaſily accounted for, why that ſhould be ſo deficient.

‖ Vide Prid. connect. vol. II. p. 497, and ſeq. Bayley's Heb. gram.

could not be invented by the Maſorites, at the period contended for, becauſe there were no men among them, at that time, who were capable of ſuch a performance. In anſwer to the firſt objection, it may be obſerved, that theſe books are, without doubt, of a much later date than is pretended. This not only appears from many particulars in the books themſelves, but from the circumſtance, that they were never heard of, even by the Jews, within a thouſand years after they are ſaid to have been written. The laſt objection is known to be entirely groundleſs, and does not, therefore, merit a ſerious anſwer. The principal argument alledged on this ſide, was, that when the Hebrew became a dead language, it was almoſt impoſſible to teach it without the vowel-points. This is a good argument for their having been in uſe from that time, but is no proof that they were affixed by Ezra.

Dr. Prideaux* differs from either of theſe two claſſes, in his opinion, with reſpect to the origin of the points. He ſuppoſes, that they were invented by the Maſorites, not long after the time of Ezra. His arguments, in ſupport of this opinion, are learned and concluſive. That they were not uſed by Ezra he thinks is evident, from the circumſtance, which has been mentioned, reſpecting the books made uſe of in the Jewiſh ſynagogues. That they were affixed a ſhort time after, he argues, from the ne-

* Connect. vol. II. p. 505.

ceſſity of them "for the reading and teaching of the Hebrew text;" and, that they were invented by the Maſorites, he thinks is likely, "becauſe of the buſineſs and profeſſion" in which they employed themſelves.* Before the Hebrew ceaſed to be vulgarly ſpoken, when all were inſtructed in it from their infancy, it probably was not difficult to learn to read it without the vowels. But when it ceaſed to be the vulgar language, the caſe was materially different.† Dr. Prideaux ſuppoſes that the vowel-points were in private uſe, for many ages, among the Maſorites, "whereby they preſerved among them, the true readings of the ſcriptures, "and taught them to their ſcholars; but," ſays he, "they were not received into the Divinity "ſchools, till after the making of the *Talmud*. For "there were two ſorts of ſchools, anciently, among "the *Jews*, the ſchools of the *Maſorites*, and the "ſchools of the *Rabbies*. The former taught only "the Hebrew language, and to read the ſcriptures "in it; the others to underſtand the ſcriptures, "and all the interpretations of them, and were the "great doctors of Divinity among them; to whom "the Maſorites were as much inferior, as the "teachers of grammar ſchools" in England, "are "to the profeſſors of Divinity in" their "univerſi-

* They ſeem to have been a "ſucceſſion of critics," from the time of Ezra to the middle of the eleventh century, "profeſſing a traditionary ſcience" of writing out, and criticizing upon, the Hebrew ſcriptures.

† We can eaſily conceive the impoſſibility of our learning the Latin language without the vowels. This is ſomewhat the caſe with the Hebrew.

" ties; and, therefore, as long as theſe vowel-points " went no higher, than the ſchools of theſe Maſorites," they were not regarded by their learned men. This, he aſſigns as a reaſon, why they were not mentioned by the writers in the firſt centuries. Sometime after the finiſhing of the Talmud,§ he ſays, that the " punctuation of the *Maſorites*" was adopted by the Divinity ſchools, and " jndged by the " *Jewiſh* doctors, to be" an " uſeful and neceſſary " way, for the preſerving of the traditionary read- " ings of the Hebrew ſcriptures."*

THE books of the *Old Teſtament* are the only remains of the pure Hebrew, with which we are acquainted.‖ In theſe are exhibited as true ſpecimens of ſublime writing, as can be found, in any productions, either ancient or modern. " They abound " with the moſt brilliant and magnificent imagery, " the boldeſt, juſteſt, and moſt gorgeous tropes and " alluſions, and with a grandeur of ſentiment whol- " ly divine."‡ The two principal characteriſtics of this language, are ſtrength and conciſeneſs. It

§ The Babyloniſh Talmud, to which he refers, was completed in the beginning of the 6th century.

* Connect. p. 514.

‖ The firſt Hebrew bibles were printed at the cloſe of the fifteenth century, by the Jews of Italy. Since then, great numbers have been publiſhed in different places, but ſome of them are conſiderably defective. The moſt correct is ſaid to be that of *Vander Hooght's*, printed at *Amſterdam* in 1705. The moſt valuable edition, that has appeared ſince, is Dr. Kennicott's, which contains Hooght's text, " with the variations of near 700 different manu- " ſcripts, collected at a great expence," " together with the varia- " tions of numberleſs Samaritan manuſcripts, compared with the " Samaritan text, as publiſhed in the London Polyglot." Gray's key, p. 23, 24.

‡ Encyclopedia.

was, perhaps, unrivalled for its purity, its ſublimity, and expreſſion. Its ſentences were commonly ſhort, and contained no ſuperfluous words. It approaches much nearer to the Engliſh in its conſtruction, than to the Greek or Latin, as there are fewer inverſions in it than exiſt in either of thoſe dialects. Its radical words are few, yet, by different modifications, they are made to convey very different ideas. It is perfectly free from anomalies both in its Nouns and Verbs. Its Nouns admit of no inflections, except to expreſs *gender* and *number;* and its Articles, Pronouns, Prepoſitions, and, in ſome inſtances, its Adverbs, are nothing more than *ſingle* letters placed either before or after the radix. A great part of its Nouns are derived from Verbs, the radices of which, in the pure Hebrew, conſiſt only of *three* letters. Where the root is made up of more, it is probably derived from ſome other language. The Verb in this, as it is in moſt dialects, is the moſt complicated part of ſpeech. But in compariſon to that in more improved languages, it is exceedingly ſimple, and very eaſily comprehended. There is in it but one Conjugation, which, however, is varied *eight* different ways, ſo as to anſwer all the purpoſes of ſo many different Conjugations. By affixing a ſingle letter to the *Verb* or *radix*, it is not unfrequently made to expreſs the *number*, *gender*, *perſon*, and *tenſe*. Indeed, the whole modifications and variations in this part of ſpeech, are for-

med by merely changing the affixes and prefixes, without producing the leaſt alteration in the radix.

THERE are nearly forty *accents* in this language, the uſe of ſome of which is imperfectly known. They, doubtleſs, ſerved, at leaſt a part of them, like our *commas*, *ſemicolons*, &c. to diſtinguiſh their ſentences. Theſe muſt have added a ſweetneſs and melody to the language, and have rendered it not leſs pleaſing to the ear than expreſſive of the ſenſe. In ſhort, the language is poſſeſſed of a conciſeneſs and rotundity, which, I preſume, do not exiſt in any other dialect.

As the GREEK language is ſo wonderful in its ſtructure, and, as our information reſpecting its riſe and progreſs, is very particular, it is obvious, that this part of the ſubject under conſideration, muſt be handled in a very ſummary and imperfect manner, on an occaſion like the preſent.

IT is univerſally agreed that the Greeks were the poſterity of *Japheth*. That part of them, who inhabited the country from Thrace to the ſouthern extremity of Peloponneſus, deſcended from *Javan* or *Ion* his fourth ſon.* Thoſe, who peopled the northern Greek countries, were the deſcendants of

* The Ionians derived their name from Ion. He had four ſons, Eliſhah, Tarſhiſh, Kittim, and Dodanim. *Gen.* x. 2. The poſterity of Eliſhah colonized the northern parts of Peloponneſus and Attica—thoſe of Tarſhiſh, ſome part of Spain—thoſe of Kittim, Macedonia and ſome part of Italy, and thoſe of Dodanim, the ſouthern part of Peloponneſus. *Wells' Sac. Geog. vol. I. ch.* 3.

Tiras or *Thiras* his ſeventh ſon. The former were more commonly called *Greeks*, and the latter *Thracians*. The Greeks, in their earlieſt ſtate, have been repreſented by hiſtorians in general, as having been ſunk to the loweſt pitch of barbariſm. This, probably, continued to be the caſe, till the arrival of ſome new colonies among them, particularly the Pelaſgi, who are deſcribed as having been well verſed in many arts. They were, indeed, emphatically termed by the moſt celebrated ancient hiſtorian, *the civilizers of Greece*.† Many reaſons render it, at leaſt credible, that, among other things, they introduced letters into that country. It has, however, been ſtrongly maintained by many, that the Greeks had no knowledge of them, till the arrival of Cadmus, a long period after. But, as the Pelaſgi were highly advanced in civilization and improvement, and as letters had probably been ſome time in uſe, it is unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that they were ignorant of them, and, if they were not, it amounts almoſt to a certainty that they introduced them. The Phenician letters of Cadmus, it ſeems, were adopted; perhaps, for this reaſon, that they might be more convenient for uſe than the Pelaſgic. He, however, and his followers, were neceſſitated to adopt the Ionic or Japhetic dialect.‡

THE *Pelaſgi* are ſaid to have been Arabians. They were the poſterity of Peleg, who deſcended

† Herod. lib. 5. cap. 58.

‡ Cadmus brought only 16 letters into Greece. Palamides, about 200 years after, added our, and Simonides, a long period after that, the remaining four.

from Shem the ſon of Noah. They probably ſpake the Hebrew, ſince, as has been remarked, it was preſerved in its purity in this family. But, as ſeveral centuries had elapſed after the deluge, before they removed to Greece, and as they had made many improvements, their dialect, doubtleſs, differed conſiderably from its original character. The form and name of the Cadmean or Phenician letter, were ſimilar to the Pelaſgic and old Hebrew, which, with reaſons elſewhere advanced, are ſtrong proofs of the cognation of their dialects. The reſemblance between the names of theſe characters or letters, may be eaſily ſeen, by comparing them with each other; thus, *Aleph* in Hebrew is *Alpha* in Greek, *Beth* is *Beta*, &c.

It is ſaid by thoſe, who doubt whether the Greek or Pelaſgic language was immediately derived from the Hebrew, that it was, probably, a dialect of the Celtic. This they attempt to prove, by the affinity which they diſcover between the two dialects. By ſtripping the Greek words of the different appendages and modifications, which they would naturally obtain, in ſo long a period, and by comparing their elementary radices with thoſe of the Celtic, they think they diſcover ſo ſtrong a reſemblance between them, as will warrant them in determining, that as the latter, according to them, was the moſt ancient, it was the parent of the former. M. Geblin was a ſtrong advocate for this opinion. The Celtic, he ſays, was the primitive

language of all the European nations, among which, he includes the Grecian and Roman. Whence it happens, that an opinion of this kind has been ſo warmly eſpouſed, it is very difficult for me to determine. The Celtæ were a very ancient people, and many of the European dialects were, unqueſtionably, derived from theirs. But may we not, with as much propriety, affirm, that their dialect was derived from the Greek, as that the latter originated from the former? The etymology and hiſtory of both theſe languages prove, that they were cotemporary with each other, and that they were derived from one common parent. The Celtæ and Pelaſgi both emigrated from the country of their nativity, perhaps, about the ſame time. The former removed to the weſtern parts of Europe, and the latter* to Arabia, or ſome of the adjoining countries. Their dialects, prior to their emigration, were, doubtleſs, the ſame, but afterwards varied with their ſituations; the former ſuffering but few changes, being confined, in ſome meaſure, to the mountains and wilds of Europe, and the latter becoming more rich and poliſhed, as it was ſpoken by a civilized people.

On the whole, it may be aſſumed as a fact, that the Greek language was principally compoſed of

* The Pelaſgi are ſuppoſed to be the Arabian ſhepherds, who, for a long time, governed Lower Egypt. They invaded that country, according to Rollin and others, about 2080 years before Chriſt, and kept poſſeſſion of it until they were expelled by *Thethmoſis*, 260 years after. They then, it is ſaid, removed to Greece.

theſe two great branches—the Ionic, or the language of the original inhabitants, and the Pelaſgic, both of which were dialects of the Hebrew. There muſt have been, likewiſe, a great number of Thracian idioms in the language, as that people overrun, at one time, a great proportion of Greece. This language was, doubtleſs, ſurpriſingly different at firſt, from what it became afterwards, when the Greeks had arrived to their moſt improved ſtate. As an unrefined people have occaſion for few words, their language is commonly diſtinguiſhed for its barrenneſs. This ſeems to have been originally the caſe with the oriental dialects in general. The Greek, it is ſaid, may be traced to about 300 *radical* words. By combining theſe in an endleſs variety of ways, this language, we ſee, was finally made aſtoniſhingly exuberant. The progreſs of its refinement muſt have been rapid, ſince it had become highly poliſhed at the time of *Homer* and *Heſiod*, of which we want no other proof than their own writings. It was brought to that perfection by a claſs of men among the Pelaſgi, who reſembled the *bards* in Britain, as their office was to recount thoſe heroic actions, which were thought worthy of being tranſmitted to poſterity. This order of men, for a long time, embraced a great part of the learning in Greece, and were, therefore, alone capable of producing ſuch a change in their language. By cultivating it inceſſantly, they new modified thoſe harſh and jarring materials, of which it was origi-

nally compoſed, and produced in it a ſurpriſing fecundity of vocables.

My obſervations on the Etymology of this language, will be the more particular, as they may have the double effect of ſhewing its affinity with the common parent of all languages, and of exhibiting the character of the language itſelf.

The firſt variation or flexion in the Greek language, ſays the celebrated grammarian *Pare*, was in its *Article*. Thus, in ο ανθρωπος they varied the Article inſtead of the radical Noun; ſo that it was Nom. ο ανθρωπ, Gen. του ανθρωπ, &c. This plan ſeems to have been borrowed from the Hebrew. The Greeks afterwards deviated from it, by adding the Article, or fragments of it, to the Noun; and, as they preſerved the uſe of it, in ſome meaſure, as before, this change produced a very great variety in their dialect.—There ſeems to be a defect in the gender of almoſt all languages. This is particularly obſervable in the Greek. The Neuter is very frequently uſed where one of the others ought to be, and, on the contrary, the Maſculine and Feminine are made uſe of, where the Neuter might be very properly adopted. The Hebrew is altogether deſtitute of the Neuter; this gender muſt have been, therefore, a late invention.—The *Comparative* degree in the Adjective of this language, was formed, by adding the Hebrew word *yateer*, which ſignifies excellent, to the Poſitive, and then affixing the

Greek termination οσ. The *Superlative* was in like manner formed, by ſubjoining the Syrian word *tath* with οσ.*

THE moſt complicated part of ſpeech, in this language, is the Verb. With regard to its variations and inflections, grammarians† in general obſerve, that they are formed by joining to the *radix*, the Subſtantive Verb ειμι, and, in a few inſtances, the Gothic auxiliary *ha*, which "pervades many languages." The Subſtantive Verb was probably firſt varied, as the Article was prior to the Noun. This verb is ſaid to have been derived from the Hebrew word *heih* fuit, which, after the aſpirates are taken away, becomes ει. The Greeks, by modelling it agreeably to their taſte, brought it into the form, in which it now exiſts. As the great variety of inflections, in the Greek language, were not of equal antiquity, we may rationally ſuppoſe that thoſe *tenſes*, which were the moſt neceſſary, had a priority of exiſtence. The *Imperfect*, the *two Indefinites*, and one of the *Futures*, being the leaſt eſſential, were, therefore, poſterior in point of time to the reſt. With reſpect to the *Voices*, the *Active* muſt have been the firſt which was formed, the *Middle* next, and the *Paſſive*, being the moſt intricate, the laſt. There ſeems to be a penury in the Greek *Prepoſitions*. Many of them have, at leaſt,

* Encyclopedia, art. Philology.
† Bayley, Pare, &c.

twenty different ſignifications, and ſome of them admit of ſeveral contrary meanings.

THE numerous *particles*, with which this language abounds, tend to enrich it, in a very high degree. Of what particular uſe they were, except it be for expletives, it is, perhaps, not eaſy to determine. The Iliad of Homer, the Memorabilia of Xenophon, and the Select Orations of Demoſthenes, are filled with them, and this is ſaid to be the caſe with other Grecian productions. They probably anſwered the ſame purpoſe, with a number of ſervile letters in the Hebrew, whoſe office appears to be indeterminate. If this was the caſe, we may rationally conclude that they were derived from them. They certainly add a beauty to the language, which it would not have otherwiſe poſſeſſed, and which is entirely loſt in the tranſlations. All the oriental languages, it is ſaid, abound with particles of this kind.

IN the Greek language we are preſented with four principal dialects, which had numerous ſubdiviſions. Theſe all originated in the countries, from which the particular tribes, who uſed them, emigrated.* They all became exquiſitely poliſhed, particularly the Attick, Ionick and Æolick. Thoſe, by whom theſe were ſpoken, " early made " a progreſs in refinement, and all the works they " produced were diſtinguiſhed by elegance and

* Vide Herod. l. 1. c. 142, and l. 2. cap. 53. Mattaire's Gr. Dial.

"taſte." The Dorick was rather more uncouth and leſs harmonious than the reſt, but, at the ſame time, highly diſtinguiſhed for its grandeur and ſimplicity. Theſe dialects gave the poet a fine ſcope for the ſelection of ſuch words, as would promote, in the beſt manner, the beauty of his poems. Homer ſeems to have uſed them promiſcuouſly as beſt ſuited his taſte. We, conſequently, diſcern in his writings, a continually diverſified and beautiful arrangement. The leading ſtyle of this *Prince of poets* was the Ionick. This dialect was peculiarly ſonorous and flowing, but rather copious, redundant, and deficient in nerves. The Attick, which was in ſome meaſure the parent of the Ionick, was much more poliſhed than either of the reſt. The Æolick, however, notwithſtanding it was deſtitute of the elegance of the Attick, was excelled by no one for its energy and boldneſs. Multitudes of authors wrote in each of theſe dialects, particularly in the Attick, Ionick and Dorick.‖

"WHAT ſweetneſs!" ſays an elegant hiſtorian,* "is in the language of the Greeks, what richneſs! "what harmony! How faithfully does it interpret "the mind and the heart! Whilſt by the copiouſ-"neſs and boldneſs of its expreſſions, it ſufficed to

‖ In the *Attick*, wrote Ariſtrophanes, Thucydides, Plato, Iſocrates, Xenophon and Demoſthenes—in the *Ionick*, Homer, Hippocrates and Herodotus—in the *Dorick*, Archimedes, Theocritus and Pindar, and in the *Æolick*, Sappho and Alcæus; there is, likewiſe, a mixture of it in Homer and Pindar.

* See Anacharſis travels, III. 18.

" ſignify all their ideas, and clothed them when " neceſſary in brilliant colours, its melody inſtil- " led perſuaſion into their ſouls." No language is ſo well adapted as the Greek to make the ſound echo to the ſenſe. " It is inveſted with the power of ex- " preſſing every paſſion of the human ſoul, in ſuch " terms, as oblige it to aſſimilate to the paſſion it " would excite." It is flexible and ſonorous, majeſtic, graceful and ſtrong. Its figures, which originated in its infancy, and which, afterwards, became " a matter of art," gave it a muſical expreſſion beyond every other language. An imperfect idea, only, of the ſtyle of the Greeks, can be derived from a tranſlation of their works. Its ſpirit and magnificence muſt be in a great meaſure loſt. If the facts are perfectly known, the linguiſt derives a peculiar pleaſure from a peruſal of their writings. He is inſenſibly led to obſerve, that they have a ſtrong tendency to improve his underſtanding, and to cultivate his taſte. The ſtyle of the Grecian writers was, certainly, far ſuperior to ours, in grandeur and elegance. They wrote with a purity and ſimplicity, a ſweetneſs and majeſty, which it is not in our power to attain.

" *Graiis ingenium, Graiis dedit ore rotundo*
" *Muſa loqui.*"

HOR. ART. POET.

THERE appears to be a great diviſion among writers, with reſpect to the ſources of the LATIN language. Some maintain, that it was derived from the Celtic. They advanced this opinion, as has

been obſerved, of the Greek. Others ſuppoſe, that it was cotemporary with the Celtic and Greek, and derived, as they were, immediately from the Hebrew. The moſt probable opinion, however, is, that it was formed poſterior to the Greek, from a number of harſh and diſcordant dialects ſpoken by different tribes. Some of theſe, ſays Lhuyd, were the Oſci, Laeſtrigones, Auſonians, Enotrians, Umbrians and Sabines: to theſe have been added by others, the Arcadians, the Pelaſgi and Celtæ. The moſt numerous and civilized of theſe tribes, appear to have been the Pelaſgi and Arcadians. The dialects, which they uſed, were, therefore, the ground work of the Latin; the old *Æolian* Greek, which was ſpoken by the latter, being the principal model, on which it was formed. That dialect, before it became thoroughly poliſhed, is ſaid by thoſe who were acquainted with it, to have been very ſimilar to the Latin, which is a proof of this aſſertion. This reſemblance, ſay they, appeared particularly in their letters, and in the plan of their declenſions.

As the Latin was compoſed of ſo many different dialects, a great part of which were in a high degree unpoliſhed, we find many more anomalies in it than in the Greek. No writer previouſly to *Ennius*, the celebrated Calabrian poet, who flouriſhed about 200 years before Chriſt, gave it much elegance, but it had ever remained in a rude and unimproved ſtate; it muſt have been, therefore, extremely dif-

ficult to render it perfectly regular. Soon after the juſt mentioned author, it roſe to a high pitch of perfection, and, if we except the Greek, was not ſurpaſſed by any of the European languages. The period of its excellence, however, was ſhort, as it ſoon degenerated after the Auguſtan age, into a kind of unnatural ſtiffneſs, and, after a few centuries, into rudeneſs and barbarity.

" THE more ſimple," ſays Dr. Smith,* in his treatiſe on the formation of languages, " any lan-
" guage is in its compoſition, the more complex it is
" in its declenſions and conjugations; and, on the
" contrary, the more ſimple it is in its declenſions
" and conjugations, the more complex it muſt be
" in its compoſition." The truth of this remark is ſtrikingly obſervable in the *Greek* and *Latin* languages. The former is excelled by very few for ſimplicity in compoſition, there being in it, as has been obſerved, but 300 radical words, and thoſe, who are acquainted with it, need not be informed of its intricacy both in its Nouns and Verbs. The latter, on the contrary, like the Engliſh, is very complex in its compoſition, and, therefore, ſimple in its declenſions and conjugations. It is for inſtance, entirely deſtitute of a *Dual* number. The Greek language, at the time the Latin was formed, had no number of this kind, otherwiſe it would doubtleſs have been introduced into this language.

* Moral Sentiments, ad fin.

It, farther, has no *Article* like the Greek, the Latins muſt, therefore, have ſuffered an inconvenience on this account. Every one, who obſerves the utility of it in our own language, muſt ſee how deficient that language is, which is deſtitute of it. In its Verb it has no *Optative Mood* and no *Middle Voice*. It has, likewiſe, but one *Future* and no *Indefinites* diſtinct from the Præterite, which are much wanted. Theſe muſt have been late inventions in the Greek. There are very great deficiences in the Latin *Participle*, particularly in its being deſtitute of a *Perfect* active and *Preſent* paſſive. There is, likewiſe, much wanted a *Preſent Participle* in the *Subſtantive Verb*, *Sum*. There appears, alſo, to be a great number of deficiences in the Syntax of this language, a particular conſideration of which, I am neceſſitated, through want of time, to omit. This penury in the Latin language renders it extremely difficult to tranſlate it with propriety.

ALTHOUGH the Latin Verb is much ~~more~~ leſs complex than the Greek, it can ſcarcely be compared to the Engliſh, in this particular. Indeed, the ſimplification of the Engliſh Verb rather tends to weaken than to increaſe its ſtrength. Several words are frequently neceſſary to denote, what one would in Latin. What, for inſtance, the Latins would expreſs by the word *donaviſſem*, we are obliged to, by four diſtinct words, *I ſhould have given*. "It is un-" neceſſary," ſays Dr. Smith, "to ſhow how much

" this prolixneſs muſt enervate the eloquence of all " modern languages."

THE Latin tongue is poſſeſſed of a ſtrength and majeſty, which, I preſume, are rarely to be met with in any other dialect. It is, however, inferior to the Greek in its beauty, harmony and gracefulneſs. As the Greeks were endowed with ſuch an unbounded ſhare of vivacity, and with ſuch a ſurprizing quickneſs of ſenſation, their language became poſſeſſed of an expreſſiveneſs, a ſweetneſs, and a flexibility, which adapted it to every ſpecies of compoſition. As the Romans, on the contrary, were leſs ſprightly and acute, being more cold and phlegmatic, their language, partaking of their character, was more firm, more ſtately, and more ſolemn. In the writings of Greek authors we obſerve a ſeries of harmonious ſounds, a ſevere commanding melody, but an exuberance of ſtyle, which forms a ſtriking contraſt to the grave and ſuccinct compoſitions of the Romans. " The nervous boldneſs of thought, " the muſical roundings of periods, the full ſol- " emn ſwellings of words," ſo obſervable, in the eminent writers, in the Latin language, all conſpire to make it both pleaſing and agreeable.

THE beauty of this, as well as the Greek language, is in a great meaſure loſt in the tranſlations. The great advantage which the Grecian and Roman writers poſſeſſed of tranſpoſing their words agreeably

to their taſte, gave their ſentences a beautiful arrangement, of which we are entirely deſtitute.

On the whole, the ſurprizing extent of the ancient languages, particularly the Grecian and Roman, the number of writers in them of eſtabliſhed reputation, the beauty and grandeur of the languages themſelves, aſide from the conſideration that they are the ſources of our own language, are ſufficient to excite our admiration for them. The ſingle circumſtance that he believes he is reading the very words of ſome ancient warrior, orator or poet, muſt give a real pleaſure to him, who is well acquainted with his productions; and the ſtudy of the languages themſelves will be highly improving to him, as it will give him acceſs to the ſciences, as it will add ſtrength to his genius, and a poliſh to his taſte, and, therefore, aſſiſt him in thinking, ſpeaking, and writing with accuracy. In fine, to borrow the expreſſion of an elegant writer, "the languages "will be ſtudied, as long as the world have a real "regard for *good ſenſe*, *elegant writing*, and *a fine* "*taſte*."

9 7 19